

ROCKLAND FINANCE COMMITTEE
ROCKLAND TOWN HALL
ROCKLAND, MA 02370

December 16, 2009

In attendance at the December 16, 2009 Finance Committee meeting were Bill Allen, Rachel Gear, John Ellard, Rich Penney, Joe Gambon, Dolores Baronas, Ian Curran, Caryn Stevens Julei Shaffer and Paula Ferguson. Bob Macdonald was absent.

The meeting was brought to order at 6:33 pm. by Chairman John Ellard.

After review of the secretary's minutes, it was mentioned that Ian Curran was not at the last meeting as was started in the December 2, 2009 minutes. A motion was made by Rich Penney and seconded by Bill Allen to accept the minutes as amended. A unanimous vote was taken.

FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET: Chief Bob DiPoli was present to review his budget. He handed out a spreadsheet with itemizations. He explained that the Fire Alarm Account pays for stipends, upgrading of the fire alarm system and may help with the purchase of a fire alarm truck. He mentioned that this account is funded through box subscription fees.

He is hoping to have an Article for Town Meeting for the lease/purchase of a new engine or a bond. He is looking at the ambulance being replaced in a few years as it already has 30,000 miles on it. He is also looking at a hybrid car for fire prevention and a chief's car for approximately \$23,000.

His Technology Account is for Ambu-Pro upgrades and upgrading of computers.

The Fire Department received a stimulus grant of \$186,000 to help with positions lost and also the substitute account. He has currently lost 3 positions due to retirements. He has had to pay \$60,000 in sick leave buy back. He would like to replace these 3 positions if there is any money left over after the substitute account is funded properly to maintain manning. It is alright to deficit spend with the stimulus money as it is paid in increments. Rich Penney brought up the question as to why 15% of the budget is substitute and the cost effectiveness of simply hiring more people.

WATER DEPARTMENT BUDGET: Dan Callahan presented the Water Department Budget. He explained that Rockland uses more water than Abington which is why Rockland's side of the budget has increased to 54% of the budget with increased costs of chemicals coming on the Rockland side. Abington's costs were only 46%. We currently pay \$3.15 for 750 gallons of water. The rates went up July 1, 2007 and are scheduled to increase 10% to approximately \$3.50 per 750 gallons of water. The new building will be set for July 1, 2010. The salaries of union water employees was discussed. They need to provide 24/7 coverage which causes overtime costs. They currently have 3 shifts and the second and third shifts currently having one person per shift to test the water every hour. If that person is out vacation or sick, they are filled. The position is never left vacant. They also have on call emergency coverage. There is \$400,000 in the reserve account which helps to fund needed articles for system upgrades, building maintenance, etc.

VETERAN'S BUDGET: Tony Materna presented the Veteran's Budget. There are currently 21 Veteran's collecting benefits which can range in costs of \$41.00 to \$1100 per month depending on need to make ends meet. The town gets 70-75% reimbursement from the state which goes into the General Fund. It can take up to one year to get this money. So far, we have used 37% of the budget on benefits. May have to get more money depending on unemployment rates. Only Massachusetts has

this great of a program for their Veterans.

OTHER BUSINESS: Chairman Ellard mentioned that disclosure forms should be filled out and given to the Town Clerk if you have a conflict of interest. Also Paula handed out the packet for ethics and conflict of interests requirements where committee members must go on a website and take a “test” and upon completion of the test print out the form to show that it has been successfully completed.

Paula was asked to read into the minutes from the Sewer Department a few points for clarification. Their overall budget has increased by less than 1%. The sewer rates have remained the same since 2001 of \$3.00 per hundred cubic feet and the Trans out line items remains the same as 2010 budget. All was read and added.

The Library will be asked to come to one of our next meetings.

The next meeting is January 13th at 6:30 in the Lower Conference Room and the following meeting after that will be January 27th.

A motion was made by Joe Gambon to adjourn and seconded by Bill Allen. The meeting ended at 8:30.

Reserve Fund Balance: \$35,000

Respectfully submitted:

Paula Ferguson
Secretary
Rockland Finance Committee